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The situation in Afghanistan

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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1974 (2011), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) until 31 March 2012 and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on developments in Afghanistan. The present report is the first submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan since my previous report dated 9 March 2011 (A/65/783-S/2011/120), as well as a summary of key political and security developments, regional and international events related to Afghanistan, and significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

II. Political and security developments

A. Security situation

3. During the reporting period, the number of security incidents was 51 per cent higher than in the same period in 2010. The majority of incidents involved armed clashes and improvised explosive devices. Suicide attacks have increased significantly since March 2011, with 17 suicide attacks in April, including five complex attacks, a higher number than any month in 2010. Abductions and assassinations of Afghan citizens also rose during the reporting period. The city of Kandahar and its surroundings registered the majority of the incidents during the reporting period, with a quarter of the overall attacks and more than half of all assassinations recorded countrywide.

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4. On 1 April, a demonstration against the burning of the Koran in the United States of America turned violent and protestors ransacked the UNAMA compound in Mazar-e-Sharif. Three UNAMA international staff and four international guards were killed. The incident was the third direct attack against United Nations premises in 17 months, following the attack against the UNAMA office in Herat in October 2010 and the assault on the Bakhtar guesthouse in Kabul in October 2009. My Chef de Cabinet and the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security immediately travelled to Afghanistan to meet with staff members and to discuss the incident with Afghan authorities. Additional measures were taken to accelerate the ongoing process of reinforcement of UNAMA offices and residences.

5. The Afghan National Security Forces and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have intensified and diversified their operations, continuing to clear areas from the insurgency. At the same time, the insurgency remains resilient, demonstrating a capability to launch spectacular attacks, such as the multiple complex attack against Government buildings in Kandahar City on 7 May following the escape of 488 political prisoners from a nearby prison on 25 April.

6. Insurgents continued to conduct asymmetric attacks against Afghan security officials, particularly high-profile police commanders. The Kandahar Provincial Chief of Police was killed at his headquarters on 15 April, while the Northern Zone Commander, General Mohammad Daud Daud, was killed in an attack on 28 May, which also injured the ISAF Commander for Regional Command-North. Attacks by infiltrators against military compounds and recruitment centres have increased in the north-east and east. The attack against an Afghan National Army recruitment centre in Kunduz Province, on 14 March, killed more than 30 people, indicating the intent of the insurgents to undermine the efforts being made to enhance the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces.

7. During the reporting period, several demonstrations took place in mosques, university campuses and urban centres in the north, north-east, east and south-east of Afghanistan. Demonstrators, who in several locations (such as in Kandahar on 13 April) numbered in the thousands, protested against ISAF activities, including night searches and alleged harassment and detention of religious figures, and expressed general frustration with the international community in Afghanistan. This kind of civil unrest, which is indicative of wider public discontent, marks a departure from the previous sporadic demonstrations against the international civil and military presence and raises serious concern, given the possibility of orchestrated violent rioting against the international community.

B. Political developments

8. Political contestation within the newly elected Lower House of the National Assembly (Wolesi Jirga) continued almost four months after its inauguration. Activity by a controversial Special Court created in December to look into electoral issues has included an ad hoc recount of ballots. The recount was completed on 27 April, but its findings have yet to be publicly disclosed.

9. The National Assembly completed the selection of the administrative boards of both the Lower House and Upper House (Meshrano Jirga), which are broadly representative regionally and ethnically, although lacking female participation. Chairs and members of standing commissions — 18 in the Wolesi Jirga and 12 in

the Meshrano Jirga — were also chosen, with nearly two thirds of the Wolesi Jirga representatives being new.

10. Efforts to strengthen political outreach activities continued. At the 3 March International Contact Group meeting, held under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Zalmai Rassoul, stressed that the High Peace Council would continue to lead reconciliation efforts. He also expressed his appreciation for the support of the international community in this regard, noting, however, that such support should be mindful of Afghan sovereignty — a feeling echoed by the Chair of the High Peace Council, Burhanuddin Rabbani.

11. During the reporting period, the High Peace Council, accompanied and supported logistically by UNAMA, visited the provinces of Badghis, Khost, Uruzgan, Kandahar and Helmand to discuss reconciliation and reintegration with provincial authorities, elders, reconcilees and other stakeholders. From 17 to 21 May, a delegation led by the Chair of the High Peace Council and the Chief Executive of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, Masoom Stanekzai, also visited Turkmenistan and held meetings with the President, the Foreign Minister, the Chairpersons of Parliament and regional leaders of Turkmenistan to discuss cooperation between the two countries. Meanwhile, a number of opposition figures continue to publicly object to reconciliation efforts with the Taliban. A gathering of such political actors in Kabul in early May attracted some 1,500 participants.

12. In consultation with the High Peace Council, my Special Representative and UNAMA engaged provincial council representatives, religious and community leaders, as well as civil society, youth, women's groups and emerging political groups to discuss peace and reconciliation and ways to effectively engage opposition groups and begin an inclusive dialogue with all segments of the Afghan population. Meanwhile, under the guidance of my Special Representative, the UNAMA Salaam Support Group continues to promote confidence-building measures through advocacy on access to basic services, such as education, detainee release and the protection of civilians, including compliance with international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. UNAMA promotes this last issue through direct engagement with the parties, urging that they minimize risk to civilians and offering recommendations on how to do so. These measures may form the basis for some forward movement in the national and regional peace processes.

13. Progress has been reported on the reintegration of insurgents. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which manages one of the trust fund windows and provides technical and operational support to the High Peace Council and the joint secretariat of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, by the end of May, the number of individuals who joined the Programme since its start reached 1,809 throughout 17 provinces. Notably, in March and April, two reintegration events involving Taliban members occurred in Kandahar. This is a significant development in a region that has seen limited progress thus far. However, a number of national and international observers continued to question the background of many individuals who joined the Programme.

14. The Review Conference of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, held in Kabul on 10 and 11 May, assessed achievements to date and agreed on measures to enhance the implementation of the Programme. During the conference, governors voiced their frustration at the slow roll-out of the Programme and

emphasized the need to address communities rather than individual ex-combatants. The final document, which also highlights the gender dimension of the process, recognized that reconciliation and reintegration are important and integral parts of an overall peace process and that they are mutually reinforcing targets of the Programme.

C. Regional cooperation

15. The Government of Afghanistan continued its dialogue and cooperation with neighbouring countries. On 7 and 8 March, the Interior Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, visited Kabul to discuss further cooperation in efforts to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as counter-terrorism efforts. On 26 March, President Karzai visited Tehran for talks with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

16. Several bilateral meetings between Afghanistan and Pakistan took place during the reporting period. Prime Minister Yusuf Gilani of Pakistan met with President Karzai in Kabul on 16 April. President Karzai visited Islamabad on 10 and 11 June, where he met with President Asif Ali Zardari and other high-level officials. At the conclusion of President Karzai's visit, a joint declaration outlining a common vision for peaceful bilateral relations was signed by the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Zalmai Rassoul and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Hina Rabbani Khar. The inaugural meeting of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace was held in Islamabad on 11 June. The joint statement issued at the meeting noted that Pakistan expressed its full support for the efforts of the High Peace Council for promoting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and assured Pakistan's cooperation and support to the Council's efforts. Both sides agreed that the High Peace Council would act as the secretariat for the Joint Commission. On 12 June, the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement was made operational after a four-month delay. In a separate development, the tripartite meetings between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States resumed with a meeting in Islamabad on 3 May and a follow-up meeting in Kabul on 24 May.

17. On 12 May, the Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, made his first visit to Afghanistan since 2005, announcing, before a joint session of Parliament, further economic support. The Prime Minister also conveyed India's support to Afghan efforts towards national reconciliation.

18. Multilateral initiatives also took place during the reporting period. On the margins of the Fourth Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul on 10 May, ministers and high-level representatives from Afghanistan, China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates, as well as my Special Representative, exchanged views on Afghanistan, reiterating their commitment to its sovereignty, indivisibility and territorial integrity. All the participants agreed to commence preparations for the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, to be held on 2 November 2011.

19. A working group on regional cooperation was established by the International Contact Group at its Jeddah meeting, along with three other thematic working groups (on reconciliation, transition and long-term engagement). The working group on regional cooperation met for the first time on 3 June. The meeting, which was co-chaired by the Turkish Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and

my Special Representative, reaffirmed the commitment of regional players to Afghanistan's stability and economic prosperity through constructive regional engagement. In a separate development, Afghanistan announced its intention to submit a request for observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

III. Human rights

20. The protection of civilians remained a critical concern over the reporting period. UNAMA documented 2,950 conflict-related civilian casualties (including 1,090 deaths and 1,860 injuries of Afghan civilians), an increase of 20 per cent compared to the same period in 2010. Anti-Government elements were linked to 2,361 civilian casualties (80 per cent of the total number of civilian casualties), while pro-Government forces were responsible for 292 civilian casualties (10 per cent of the total number). The remaining 10 per cent could not be attributed. The rise in civilian casualties, following the Taliban's announcement of a spring offensive on 30 April, was due in part to an expansion in the operations of anti-Government elements and pro-Government forces throughout the country, particularly in the north and in the regions bordering Pakistan.

21. The majority of civilian casualties occurred in the south and south-east regions. Improvised explosive devices planted along busy roads and suicide attacks by anti-Government elements in populated civilian areas accounted for the largest number of civilian deaths and injuries. Attacks targeting convoys, buildings and personnel of the Government and pro-Government forces, as well as civilian contractors providing logistical services to pro-Government forces, also resulted in increased numbers of civilian casualties. Despite the Taliban's public statements that the offensive should target exclusively military objectives and ensure the protection of civilians, indiscriminate attacks against civilians continued. On 21 May, for example, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a national army hospital in Kabul that killed six civilians and injured 23 medical students. Intimidation, abduction and assassination of civilians associated with the Government and pro-Government forces increased, further violating the human rights of Afghans and slowing governance and development efforts.

22. Pro-Government forces continued to use air strikes and night raids to target anti-Government elements, sometimes resulting in civilian casualties and property damage. While ISAF and the Government made public apologies and considered compensation claims after such operations, these incidents continued to fuel tensions between pro-Government forces and local communities. Several violent demonstrations protesting civilian casualties and night raids occurred, with some infiltrated by anti-Government elements and other groups, resulting in further civilian casualties.

23. During the period under review, the United Nations country team worked closely with civil society and Government authorities on amendments to the draft regulation on women's protection centres put forward by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. Earlier drafts of the regulation raised questions about the continued independent management of the centres by civil society groups and the extent to which women's rights would be protected, including against the forced return to families and non-consensual disclosure of information to law enforcement authorities. The Criminal Law Reform Working Group, comprising

national and international legal experts, including the United Nations, recommended amendments that would fully protect women's rights. The amendments were incorporated in the final version of the regulation, which, at the time of the writing of this report, had been submitted to the Technical Legislative Review Committee of the Council of Ministers for the Government's approval.

24. UNAMA continued to monitor the implementation of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women, including tracking the efforts of police, prosecutors and judges to apply the law, which is being enforced in only 10 of 34 provinces. UNAMA has hosted workshops in all regions of the country over the reporting period to raise awareness about the law and the findings of the UNAMA report on harmful traditional practices against women and girls, which was published at the end of 2010. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) worked closely with the Elimination of Violence against Women Commission to promote the implementation of the law. In many areas where the justice system presence is weak, the authorities continue to refer most complaints of domestic violence and cases of running away from home to traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Women and girls who flee their homes due to abuse or threats of forced marriage are often charged with the crime of adultery or the intent to commit adultery. Although efforts are under way to raise awareness of the Elimination of Violence against Women, women continue to be arrested and prosecuted for running away from home. During the reporting period, the Supreme Court has upheld convictions of women victims of rape for the crime of adultery, with sentences of up to 15 years imprisonment. UNAMA continued to document incidents of violence against women, including "honour killings" in Badakhshan and Kunduz Provinces and the arrest and detention of women and girls for running away from home in Nangarhar and Paktya Provinces.

25. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in partnership with relevant Government ministries and non-governmental organizations, inaugurated in June the first post-release transition shelters in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul for women leaving prisons. This initiative is implemented by a local non-governmental organization. The project aims at promoting successful reintegration of women prisoners into civilian life prior to and after their release, including through providing shelter, security, food and socio-psychological and capacity-building support. As of June, Afghanistan's prisons housed nearly 650 women, some with their children (over 280 minors).

26. UNAMA continues to cooperate with transitional justice, human rights and women's groups for an increased role of civil society in provincial peace committees of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. In consultation with civil society, UNAMA has proposed mechanisms to implement the vetting of individuals for reintegration and grievance resolution, and to address the issue of political amnesty within the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. In May, members of the High Peace Council and Afghan civil society discussed implementation of the Programme and accountability for serious crimes at a two-day workshop organized by the Afghan Civil Society Forum, a local non-governmental organization.

27. Although in December 2010 the Government of Afghanistan pledged to allocate $1 million in the State budget for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the final 2011/2012 budget submitted to the Parliament allocated only $500,000. This, together with a three-month delay in salary payments

for all Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission staff owing to hold-ups in funding from major international donors, puts the Commission's independence and long-term sustainability at risk. UNAMA, with international partners, continues to assist the Commission to identify a sustainable funding mechanism.

28. Afghan journalists and media outlets continue to operate in a complex conflict environment. Many Afghan journalists report that they are directly threatened by insurgents to report favourably on them, or not to report favourably on Government activities. A statement in June by the Ulema Council called for the closure of a prominent national television broadcaster owing to "un-Islamic" coverage and criticized reporting by one of the major daily newspapers, contributing to a climate of pressure on some of the country's most outspoken independent media outlets.

29. Throughout the reporting period, UNAMA visited detention centres across Afghanistan, particularly the National Directorate of Security and Ministry of Justice facilities, to monitor arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and fair trial guarantees. UNAMA was granted access to over 24 of the National Directorate of Security detention facilities in 21 provinces throughout the country, including Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Kabul, Herat, Kunduz and Gardez. UNAMA continued to receive allegations of ill-treatment, lengthy detention without charge or trial and lack of access to defence counsel.

30. UNAMA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, organized an inter-agency briefing in Kabul to follow up on Afghanistan's initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Discussions were held with Government authorities, civil society and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission on measures to enhance children's protection from violence and to address the Committee's concerns on the treatment of children, especially girls, in the justice system as perpetrators of crimes and their placement in rehabilitation centres. Special emphasis was given to the development of a national strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children, the introduction of a legal ban on all forms of violence against children, the consolidation of a national data system, and a research agenda in this field.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul Process and aid coherence

31. During the reporting period, the Government of Afghanistan continued to implement the Kabul Process. As of June, 11 national priority programmes, out of a total of 22, have been elaborated, and consultations are under way with donors on the content, as well as financing, of the programmes. The human resource development cluster, which covers education, technical vocational training, health and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, has made significant headway with four of its five proposed national priority programmes. The infrastructure cluster has advanced key programmes in the extractive industries and regional resource sectors. The national priority programmes in which progress has been less advanced include programmes in public administration reform, subnational governance and justice.

32. The Kabul Process includes a monitoring and feedback mechanism on the London and Kabul Conference benchmarks, as well as 100-day progress reports for each national priority programme. During the reporting period, a second round of

progress reporting on national priority programmes was completed. While the Government's monitoring and reporting framework is still evolving, the mechanism is an important step in enabling regular policy dialogue between ministries and development partners and has the potential to promote increased coordination among donors in support of Government programmes. UNAMA facilitated approximately 30 consultations between line ministries and development partners and a review among partners to identify best practices and ways to further strengthen regular dialogue. In addition, UNAMA is supporting the engagement of civil society in Afghanistan's prioritized development agenda. A task force comprised of the Ministry of Finance and civil society networks has been established to facilitate regular consultation, and UNAMA is working with the representatives of the networks to support their participation in Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board structures.

33. The elaboration of Afghanistan's prioritized development agenda is taking place, however, against the backdrop of the continued absence of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) country programme. While an agreement is yet to be reached between the Government and IMF, many donors, underscoring the importance of an IMF programme as demonstration of the soundness of Afghanistan's macroeconomic status, are withholding the release of additional finances to the World Bank-administered Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. The Ministry of Finance has signalled to the international community that the continued lack of an IMF programme will have marked negative consequences for the Government's potential ability to pay salaries as well as for the continued implementation of national programmes.

34. The continued absence of an IMF programme will also impact the delivery by development partners of their commitments made at the London and Kabul Conferences to progressively transfer aid to the Government budget. During the reporting period, the Government continued to take the lead in coordinating donor financing and in advocating for the realization of donor commitments to the principles of aid effectiveness. In April, the Government released its review of donor financing to Afghanistan, the *Development Cooperation Report* (2010), and participated in the global survey on implementation of the commitments made in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Key findings suggested that Afghanistan's public finance and expenditure management reforms are leading to improvements in gross domestic product and revenue mobilization, but that budget execution remains a key concern. While initial findings suggest an increase in assistance delivered through the national budget, there are continued gaps in alignment of donor resources to Government priorities, harmonization of aid and mutual accountability for development results. Notable positive improvements have been seen in the areas of education and health, with progressive donor coordination processes resulting in better leveraging of resources and more coordinated donor/Government policy dialogue. With a view to constructively addressing aid coherence issues, the Government intends to establish a task force to develop a medium-term action plan to address these issues with donors.

35. There is consensus that it is critical to maintain momentum behind the Kabul Process and the dialogue between the international community and the Government. It has therefore been agreed to proceed with the three standing committees (on governance, socio-economic development and security) of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in July.

V. Transition update

36. The process of transition towards Afghan security responsibility (*Inteqal*), as approved and formally initiated at the NATO Lisbon Summit in November 2010, moved forward with the 22 March announcement by President Karzai of the first areas identified for transition starting in July. The seven areas are the provinces of Kabul (except the Sarobi district), Panjshir and Bamiyan and the municipalities (and corresponding districts) of Herat (Herat Province), Mazar-e-Sharif (Balkh Province), Mehtar Lam (Laghman Province) and Lashkar Gah (Helmand Province).

37. The NATO-led ISAF has undertaken a two-stage planning process for transition in coordination with the Afghan Transition Coordination Commission led by Ashraf Ghani. The first step focuses on the conditions necessary for the beginning of the transition process in the identified areas, while the second step addresses the necessary actions towards completing the transition process and reaching full Afghan security responsibility. The planning process is intended to take into account key development and governance elements that may impact the security transition and support sustainable transfer of lead security responsibility. A priority for the Government has been to address the role of provincial reconstruction teams to avoid parallel structures and to ensure that international efforts are centred on supporting the development of capacity and effective delivery of basic services by Afghan institutions. ISAF and the Government have agreed on the need for close linkage between the transition planning and the Kabul Process priorities and mechanisms so as to ensure that short-term transition activities contribute to Afghanistan's medium-term development.

38. As an observer of the process, UNAMA has engaged with Government and ISAF interlocutors with a view to avoiding parallel processes that may be counter-productive for the development of Afghan institutions, as well as mitigating any detrimental shift of resources to transition areas away from non-transition areas. The Mission continues to facilitate dialogue among development partners, and between these partners and ISAF, to ensure that development perspectives are taken into account in the transition design and planning.

39. In the field, UNAMA continues to work closely with provincial development councils and sector working groups led by line ministries to strengthen the coordination of provincial development planning and aligned support from provincial reconstruction teams and donors. As part of its effort towards greater coherence, UNAMA has facilitated an ongoing dialogue on transition among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Afghanistan in order to identify linkages between existing activities and the Government's priorities. This includes looking at ongoing United Nations activities in the first group of regional areas identified for transition in order to better support a sustainable transition process, particularly the capacity of provincial authorities to assess development needs, identify key gaps in funding and coordinate line departments and donors present in the provinces.

VI. Governance

40. There has been some progress in the implementation of the subnational governance policy framework, although significant work remains to be done, including in establishing consensus on the roles and responsibilities of Government

institutions at the central, provincial, municipal and district levels. A critical area of work is to clarify sustainable provincial budgeting mechanisms and ensure that financing approved by the central Government reaches provincial and district authorities. This will become particularly important during the transition, as it is likely that donor financing at the local level will decline in overall terms and development funds should be increasingly directed to national budget and central-level mechanisms. In May, the Ministry of Finance brought together provincial officials for a meeting on provincial budgeting. The Ministry will also initiate a pilot provincial budget programme to direct more funds to provinces in the coming months. This is an important Government-led development that must be actively supported by donors.

41. With the support of the UNDP national area-based development programme, nearly 400 elected representatives of their communities — members of District Development Assemblies from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan — gathered in Kabul in May for the first National Conference of District Development Assemblies. The Conference assessed the achievements of the Assemblies, identified lessons learned and advocated for support to the Assemblies by the central Government.

42. As part of its effort to improve the transparency of senior appointments and service delivery at the subnational level, the Government converted the status of Deputy Governors and District Governors from political appointees to civil servant positions and established transparent and merit-based recruitment. The Civil Service Commission and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance have recruited 56 District Governors and 13 Deputy Governors through the second quarter of 2011. UNAMA closely observed the process and noticed that, in spite of some challenges at the local level, the process was implemented correctly and was positively received by the general public.

43. The joint anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee was inaugurated on 11 May. The six members (three Afghan and three international), who were appointed through a presidential decree, highlighted the efforts being made by the Government of Afghanistan in fulfilling the outcomes of the London and Kabul Conferences. Over the coming months, the Committee is expected to help develop clear and objective benchmarks for progress in tackling corruption and to prepare periodic reports on national and international activities for the President, the Parliament and all Afghans.

44. Even as challenges to the 2010 electoral process continue, there are efforts to ensure that electoral expertise and resources built up to date are retained and consolidated. UNDP is in the process of finalizing a successor electoral assistance project to the ELECT (Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow) project in consultation with Afghan authorities and donors, which is expected to commence in July or August.

VII. Humanitarian assistance

45. During the reporting period, the ongoing conflict and the growing number of security incidents across the country resulted in a considerable increase in displacements. Humanitarian access further decreased as a result of insecurity. Attacks or violence in and around civilian infrastructure, including schools and medical facilities, continued. In certain areas, the response to the annual spring floods was hampered by fighting. In the central region, only 39 out of 111 districts

were accessible to the United Nations, and in and around Kandahar only 5 out of 55 districts were accessible. United Nations agencies restricted their activities to provincial headquarters and their immediate surroundings, and internally displaced persons often had to travel to main cities in order to receive assistance. Humanitarian workers continued to be subject to attacks, and certain organizations that previously enjoyed relatively good access have seen that access diminished. In May, 26 incidents against humanitarian workers were reported, while 14 incidents were reported in the first two weeks of June. Natural disasters remained a constant threat to vulnerable populations. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and partners therefore developed regional contingency plans to streamline information sharing, pre-position aid stocks and strengthen delivery mechanisms. As part of overall effort to facilitate the work of the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority, 10 regional plans were prepared during the reporting period. To ensure timely and appropriate responses to needs, the humanitarian community strengthened its capacity alongside lead agencies of the humanitarian cluster at national and regional levels.

46. The World Food Programme (WFP) is making renewed efforts to support local economic development by increasing local procurement of food directly from Afghan manufacturers. As of May, WFP had purchased 4,000 metric tons of wheat from small-scale farmers or agricultural cooperatives and roughly 24,000 metric tons of wheat from the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture. As of mid-May, WFP required an additional $250 million through the end of the year to continue planned support for 7 million vulnerable people, with little indication that funding will become available to meet the shortfall. A strategic review of WFP activities was conducted to determine how to best prioritize its food assistance given the funding outlook and conditions on the ground.

47. Displacement figures at the end of May topped 435,436 individuals, up 4 per cent from the last report, indicating a significant acceleration of the pace and scale of conflict-related displacement. Conflict-driven displacement and shortcomings in reintegration support are not only humanitarian issues, but also represent a significant security concern, given their destabilizing potential. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supported the return of 23,823 individuals (19,536 individuals from Pakistan and 4,250 individuals from Iran (Islamic Republic of)) during the reporting period, bringing the cumulative assisted returns since 2002 to over 4.6 million, or approximately 25 per cent of the estimated national population in Afghanistan. UNHCR is promoting a more comprehensive approach to sustainable reintegration, with pilots identified in seven provinces. This approach is broadly linked to regional considerations discussed at the Tripartite Commission meetings in Kabul in early May.

48. While national figures indicate a silent crisis for 5 million children (42 per cent of all children) not in school due to poverty and vulnerability, significant progress was made in promoting access to schooling through provision of learning spaces, establishment of community-based schools and the provision of teaching and learning materials. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has provided literacy and skills development classes to illiterate youths and adults in 18 provinces through the programme for the enhancement of literacy in Afghanistan. Between April and June, 91,400 learners were enrolled in 3,656 literacy classes in 18 provinces in Afghanistan. Despite the security situation in some districts, literacy classes are being held successfully.

49. Afghanistan remains one of the four polio-endemic countries in the world, and UNICEF, along with partners, continues to support children's polio vaccination campaigns in the country. These campaigns are essential to stop transmission of the polio virus, which is manifest primarily in the southern region. Vaccination campaigns are, however, hampered by security conditions in the southern region; during the reporting period, a significant number of areas remained inaccessible in Kandahar Province and, most recently, in Zabul Province. Innovative efforts continue to be explored to reach and vaccinate all children under five years of age in those areas.

50. Progress has been made towards clearing mine and explosive ordnance. By May, up to 27 per cent of areas contaminated with mines had been cleared. This is an increase of 15 per cent since 2006. A total of 255 (out of 398) districts are still contaminated.

VIII. Counter-narcotics

51. In March, under the Triangular Initiative, Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran carried out a joint operation on the three border crossings in the provinces of Farah, Nimroz and Herat. As a result of this operation, almost 1,000 kg of opium and over 600 kg of heroin were seized on both sides of the border and a number of traffickers were arrested by both Afghan and Iranian police.

52. The second train-the-trainer programme at the Counter-Narcotics Training Academy commenced in May. The 12-week programme aims to strengthen the Academy cadre towards building the capacity of an Afghan-owned, independent centre of excellence in the region. Complementing the Government's development strategy, this initiative is considered crucial for Afghanistan's long-term strategy to address illegal opium production, organized crime, manufacture of illegal drugs and smuggling of precursor chemicals.

53. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime facilitated the visit of the Head of the Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan to Kabul on 1 and 2 May. During meetings between the Head of the Anti-Narcotics Force and his Afghan counterparts, both parties agreed that a regional approach was needed to address narcotic-related issues in Afghanistan and called for closer cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries in this regard. They also recognized the need for a joint counter-narcotics strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was further agreed that the two countries would conduct the first joint field operation under the Triangular Initiative before the end of June. Separate multilateral counter-narcotics initiatives during the period under review included the sixth Triangular Initiative senior officials meeting between Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in Tehran on 31 May.

54. Progress has been made by the Government of Afghanistan in the establishment of drug treatment and HIV prevention services. The methadone maintenance therapy is a pilot programme for 200 drug users, implemented by the Ministry of Public Health. An external evaluation in April, supported by the World Health Organization, found that the programme was in line with international and national guidelines and was effective. However, the irregular supply of methadone therapy in Afghanistan, resulting from the short-term import approvals of methadone by the Government authorities, has had an adverse effect on treatment outcomes for drug users.

IX. Mission support

55. Against a backdrop of declining security and in keeping with the recommendations of the Department of Safety and Security, UNAMA implemented security enhancement projects throughout the country. In managing the aftermath of the Mazar-e-Sharif incident and to ensure safety and access of staff to counselling, the majority of international staff was relocated to Kabul pending completion of additional security enhancement at a secondary site in the city that was previously used solely for residential accommodation of staff members. Once the security enhancement works are completed in June, a limited number of international staff will return to Mazar-e-Sharif on a permanent basis, using this secondary site for both office and residential accommodation. This is to be an interim solution pending completion of a purpose-built office and residential compound to be the new regional headquarters in Mazar-e-Sharif. A memorandum of understanding was signed with the Government of Afghanistan in May, and work on this new compound is expected to be completed by March 2012. Construction of a secure regional office compound on land provided free of charge by the Government continues in Kandahar and is expected to be completed by the last quarter of 2011. A similar project is being developed for Bamyan, where a memorandum of understanding with the Government was signed in April and work is expected to be completed by March 2012.

56. In order to ensure that all mission support activities remain fully operational in times of crisis through remote links to Kuwait, UNAMA conducted a live disaster recovery and business continuity exercise in Kuwait in May. The success of this exercise underscores the viability of maintaining a support office in a secure location.

57. In close consultation with UNAMA and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a team of experts from United Nations Headquarters conducted a review to explore potential efficiencies in consolidating UNAMA and UNAMI support offices in Kuwait. The recommendations of the review team are expected to be submitted for endorsement by the Department of Field Support in June. Once approved, the recommendations will serve as the basis for the development of the 2012-2013 budget proposals for both Missions. Project implementation is expected to be rolled out in stages over a two-year period.

58. Despite the deteriorating security environment, UNAMA has been able to maintain its vacancy rates at 21 per cent for international staff and 13 per cent for national staff (as of April 2011). I wish to thank Member States for their support in harmonizing the terms and conditions of service among the United Nations system staff serving in hardship locations, such as Afghanistan, as the retention of experienced staff remains as much a priority as recruitment.

X. Observations

59. **The current reporting period overlaps with the beginning of the implementation of the transition towards greater Afghan leadership and ownership. This is taking place amidst lingering internal and external tensions and against the backdrop of intensified military operations and the resumption of fierce seasonal anti-Government attacks, of which the civilian population is bearing the brunt of the burden. Against this background, UNAMA has**

continued to align its strategic priorities with its renewed mandate, in line with the needs and aspirations of the Afghan people, and in support of Government-led initiatives. Without prejudice to the comprehensive review required by the Security Council in its resolution 1974 (2011), these priorities continue to be defined as: the facilitation of political processes for peace and reconciliation, the protection and promotion of human rights, support to accountable governance, advocacy and promotion of coherent efforts in support of the transition process, and socio-economic development to further medium- to long-term stability.

60. **Security for the United Nations in Afghanistan has become an increasing challenge for the Organization. In the aftermath of the Mazar-e-Sharif incident, I offered my condolences and support to the families of the victims and those affected. I continue to have the deepest admiration for the dedication shown by all the United Nations staff who continue to serve in Afghanistan, despite the deadly threats they frequently encounter in their duties. The security and well-being of United Nations personnel remain of utmost concern. In this regard, I appreciate the efforts being undertaken by my Special Representative and his team in addressing these concerns. I will continue to give my personal attention to ensuring that the necessary security recommendations are implemented. I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Afghanistan for its efforts and its renewed commitment to support UNAMA in this respect. I also call upon Member States to join me in ensuring that the United Nations has the commensurate resources to remain fully engaged and to support the people of Afghanistan.**

61. **I am concerned by the human cost of the conflict and its impact on the lives of ordinary Afghans. Persistent insecurity has brought about a steady rise in civilian casualties. I remain especially concerned by the number of civilians, in particular Afghan children and women, being indiscriminately affected by the conflict. All concerned must do their utmost to protect civilians and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.**

62. **Progress towards a political settlement requires a redoubling of effort by all parties to promote mutual confidence and to explore opportunities for peace. It will necessitate, eventually, a demonstrated willingness to engage in a structured dialogue that addresses both confidence-building and substantive issues. Such a dialogue, in turn, needs empowered interlocutors and must be part of a wider, inclusive political process. This should be supported by the international community, not least so as to safeguard the hard-earned political gains made by Afghanistan's democratic institutions.**

63. **The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme is currently the one working programme dealing with the reintegration of armed anti-Government individuals and groups willing to lay down their weapons. Improvements in its delivery and organization can assist in reintegrating former combatants into their communities. While the Programme has the potential to provide insurgents with an escape from combat, it must also ensure that those seeking to join and benefit from the Programme are properly vetted to confirm that they are genuine reconcilees, not criminal or political groups seeking either blanket amnesty for past crimes or to profit from the rewards of the Programme.**

64. The decision of the Security Council to split the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) is a positive development in support of the Afghan-led reconciliation efforts. The Government of Afghanistan and the international community should continue to give due consideration to the tools offered by the sanctions regime. Further confidence-building measures on the part of all sides could help lay the foundations for a political process.

65. In this regard, the UNAMA Salaam Support Group will continue to support and advise the High Peace Council on matters relating to peace and reconciliation, including on their national consultations and outreach. UNAMA will also encourage and back efforts to elicit the views, concerns and aspirations of all segments of Afghan society, and support their inclusion in a comprehensive reconciliation process. A political solution to the conflict that allows the full participation and engagement of all Afghans is critical to a transition that promotes stability, sustainable peace and greater respect for basic human rights and freedoms.

66. Positive steps towards regional cooperation will also be important for the sustainability of any eventual peace process, and, in that regard, I express my support for the working group meeting co-chaired by UNAMA and Turkey in Istanbul in early June as a prelude to the full conference in Istanbul later in the year. The linked areas of regional trade and security require confidence and collaboration between neighbouring States. My Special Representative will continue his regional coordination role to facilitate closer dialogue between the regional actors.

67. The transition process faces many challenges as it moves from July onwards into the implementation phase for the first group of areas identified. This process remains primarily an ISAF priority responsibility. Yet as the transition process matures, it is important to ensure that it is Afghan-owned. UNAMA has stressed the need for a comprehensive engagement with Afghan line ministries for the successful planning and implementation of the process. UNAMA field offices will endeavour to support the local government's contribution to the process.

68. ISAF, alongside the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, continues to lead international capacity-building and reform efforts for the Afghan National Security Forces. The overall performance of the Afghan security forces has improved as a result of focused training and capacity-building efforts. The *Inteqal* process to Afghan assumption of all security responsibilities must continue to build on those efforts.

69. It is vital that the transition be managed so as to lead to an improvement in security, as well as better access to essential services for the population. Development assistance, an evident "peace dividend", must be sustained for those areas currently undergoing transition as well as all other provinces.

70. For there to be proper human security, the Afghan people must be able to see their grievances addressed and have access to basic social services, economic opportunity, freedom of movement and protection from criminal and armed groups. The establishment of a legitimate and efficient governance framework at the local level, as well as functional relations between the central

and local government, are critical for Afghanistan's stability and prosperity. The lack of agreement on an IMF programme has the potential to negatively impact the roll-out of the Government's prioritized agenda for economic growth and development. A protracted delay in implementing the national priority programmes, owing to a suspension or reduction in funding, could lead to an imbalance between the civilian and military components of Afghanistan's transition, which is due to begin in late July.

71. The inauguration of the joint independent anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee demonstrated the Government's resolve to implement the commitments made at the London and Kabul Conferences. I welcome the launch of the Committee and offer every encouragement in its efforts to address an issue of mutual concern to both the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. I encourage all parties to recognize the value of the Committee's work as both a platform to help reduce corruption and deliver good governance, and a confidence-building measure that promotes transparency and accountability.

72. The checks and balances between the three branches of Government have been the subject of both tension and negotiation in Afghanistan's nascent democracy. The investigation by the Special Court has distracted the Wolesi Jirga members from the critical issues on the legislative agenda, as the results of the recount by the Special Court threaten to unseat many members. The effects of these impending decisions may undermine future electoral activities, if not handled properly.

73. The United Nations in Afghanistan remains committed to the principle of "Delivering as One". To this end, I am pleased to announce that the United Nations team in Afghanistan, under the leadership of my Special Representative, has completed its integrated strategic framework. The integrated strategic framework has been structured to ensure that it is synchronized with the upcoming midterm review of the 2010-2013 United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Consequently, the integrated strategic framework is not an end in itself, but rather serves as a mechanism to bring greater coherence to the United Nations programme delivery efforts in support of the Kabul Process.

74. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1974 (2011), I have commenced the preparations for a comprehensive review of the mandated activities of UNAMA and United Nations support in Afghanistan. This review will be conducted in consultation with the Government of Afghanistan and relevant international stakeholders, and will inform the Council's review of the mandate of the Mission in March 2012.

75. Finally, I thank my Special Representative, Staffan de Mistura, the staff of UNAMA and all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, national and international, for their dedication and commitment towards a more peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan.